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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a federally mandated study done to determine the best means of identifying, locating, and counting homeless children and youth, for the purpose of facilitating their successful participation in school and other educational activities. Several alternative approaches to obtaining consistent national estimates of the number of homeless children and youth, their educational needs, and their living situations are examined. These methodologies were designed to be implemented at the national level. This document describes possible data sources and information needs; four practical alternatives for the design of national estimation studies (the best of which involves primary data collection with service using and non-service using street homeless people, plus additional questions attached to an on-going national survey); cost estimates for various methods, for combinations of methods, and for a special study to enumerate homeless street youth; methods of obtaining annual estimates for homeless children and some youth; and scheduling issues for a national data collection effort. Included are six exhibits. An appendix contains bid specifications and instrument guidelines. (JB)

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ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

FINAL REPORT

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ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This report responds to a Congressional mandate to the Department of Education (ED). P.L. 101-645, Section 724(b)(2) directed ED to conduct a study to determine the best means of identifying, locating, and counting homeless children and youth, for the purpose of facilitating their successful participation in school and other educational activities. This work was conducted by the Department of Education, in cooperation with several federal agencies: the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and of Health and Human Services, the Interagency Council on the Homeless, and the Bureau of the Census.

ED and State Coordinator Activities

The 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act provided limited funding for states to coordinate educational services to homeless children and youth. State coordinators were established in each state; coordinators had the responsibility to report the numbers of homeless children and youth requiring services in their state, and to identify and address barriers preventing school attendance.

To help coordinators fulfill their mandate, ED held technical assistance sessions, issued guidelines, and contracted with a private firm to provide technical assistance. During FY88 and FY89, state coordinators attempted to count homeless children and youth. They reported approximately 220,000 school-age homeless children in FY88, and between 215,000 and 273,000 school-age homeless children in FY89.

Difficulties Encountered

State coordinators used a wide variety of methods to obtain their counts of homeless children and youth. Yet despite the effort invested in these statewide counts, the technical assistance available, and the improvements in the second year, the results remain highly inconsistent across states, and their degree of accuracy cannot be estimated. Any summary based on these reports is likely to contain many inaccuracies.

1990 McKinney Act Amendments

State coordinators' difficulties in reaching reliable and valid estimates of the number of homeless children and youth prompted Congress to require the Department of Education to conduct a study to determine the best means of identifying, locating, and counting homeless children and youth for the purposes of assuring their access to education (P.L. 101-645, Section 724 (b) (2)).

The Purpose of this Report

In response to P.L. 101-645, ED requested the Urban Institute to develop methodologies, along with estimates of their accuracy and cost, to provide a one-time and an annual count of homeless children and youth. One version of the count was to exclude children and youth in doubled-up families; a second version of the count was to include these children. In addition to the estimate of population size, the methodologies were also to supply information about school attendance, barriers to attendance, and children's living arrangements.

This report presents several alternative approaches to obtaining consistent national estimates of the number of homeless children and youth, their educational needs, and their living situations. These methodologies are designed to be implemented at the national level. There is no expectation that ED will ask states to conduct studies according to these methods, although states may adapt any of the methods described here to their own use if they wish to do so.

DEFINITIONS

Clear definitions of the population of interest are essential in any counting effort, because they determine who should be included in the count and who should be excluded. The definition of homelessness contained in the McKinney Act is not specific enough for research purposes. Therefore the Urban Institute and the Advisory Committee for this project identified and developed specific operational definitions for five components of the population of homeless children and youth (including pregnant and parenting teenagers, if they meet the definitional criteria).

Components of the Homeless Children and Youth Population

- **Children with their families in shelters** -- "shelters" include all emergency shelters and transitional shelters for the homeless, all domestic violence shelters, all shelters, centers or programs for runaway and homeless youth, and any hotel/motel/apartment voucher arrangement paid because the family is homeless.

- **Children with their families in other places, not meant for human habitation** -- including streets, parks, alleys, parking ramps, parts of the highway system, transportation depots and other parts of transportation systems (e.g., subway tunnels, railroad cars), abandoned buildings, squatter situations, building roofs or stairwells, chicken coops and other farm outbuildings, caves, vehicles, and other similar places.

- **Children in precarious housing situations at serious risk of homelessness, with or without their own parents** -- to be considered "precariously housed," the housing situation must have arisen from an inability to pay for one's own housing due to an emergency, and must be of short anticipated duration (less than 60 days). Circumstances under which a precariously housed child or family might be considered literally homeless include: no prospects for stable housing; and, no financial resources.

- **Children in Institutions** -- children or youth who, because of their own or a parent's homelessness, reside temporarily, and for a short anticipated duration, in hospitals, residential treatment facilities, emergency foster care, detention facilities and the like, and whose legal care has not (yet) been assumed by a foster care agency.

  Youth on their Own, in Shelters or Other Places -- a youth, under 18, who has slept at least one night during the past 30 days in unconventional locations, without supervision of a legally responsible adult. "Unconventional locations" include shelters, and all those places described above as "other places, not meant for human habitation."

DATA SOURCES AND INFORMATION NEEDS

Data Sources

Seven potential sources of information are described, along with their coverage of the five components of the population of homeless children and youth. These data sources are:

1. Direct interviews with homeless service using parents;
2. Direct interviews with homeless parents "on the streets;"
3. Direct interviews with household members drawn from a sample of conventional dwelling units in very low-income neighborhoods;
4. Interviews with service providers;
5. Data from city or state estimates;
6. Data from institutional records;
7. Estimates based on data from on-going national surveys (with or without adding questions to the survey to determine school attendance and barriers for children in doubled-up situations).

Only the first three, in combination, are capable of covering all homeless children and youth. Each of the other data sources omits some segments of the population; some data sources omit most segments.

Information Needs

Each of the seven data sources was also assessed for its ability to supply the types of information required by Congress, including an accurate count of homeless children and youth, and a description of their school attendance, barriers to attendance, and living arrangements. Only the interview methods are capable of providing all of the information required. Only if the first three interview methods are used in combination will all of the required information be available for all segments of the population of homeless children and youth.

Approaches Not Taken

In the legislation mandating this study (P.L. 101-645), Congress specified several potential data sources whose utility should be examined: the 1990 Census; and service providers, including shelters, schools, and social service agencies. Upon investigation, each lacked coverage of either some population segments, some required information, or both. Further, each presented substantial hurdles to consistent national data collection. The investment required to overcome these hurdles almost certainly exceeds the cost of a national stand-alone study, and has a lower probability of achieving its data collection goals.

Advantages of Original Data Collection

Congress expressed great concern with the educational needs of homeless children and youth, and the barriers to the fulfillment of those needs. A stand-alone study using direct interviews with homeless parents offers a tremendous improvement over current approaches, for these issues of great concern to Congress as well as for estimates of population size. With data from a national interview study, analysts could:

- Identify the proportions of homeless children and youth experiencing each type of educational deficit (these figures would be accurate for the nation as a whole, since they would be based on a nationally representative sample);
- Identify the proportions of homeless children and youth experiencing each type of educational barrier (also accurate for the nation as a whole);
- Estimate proportions of children with particular deficits or barriers for communities of different types, in different regions of the country or for rural versus suburban versus urban populations;
- Determine the associations between specific conditions of communities and of homeless households that produce different types of educational need, or different barriers to participation in education;
- Develop an analytic strategy for assessing each homeless child's risk of experiencing particular educational problems and barriers.

DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

The ideal study design would cover all segments of the homeless children and youth population, and obtain for each segment all of the required information. It would provide accurate national estimates of population size and characteristics, and would use data on local housing, employment, education and other conditions and policies to help explain differences in homelessness rates, living arrangements, and school attendance.

The Most Complete Design

The most complete design would accomplish these objectives using primary data collection (interviews) with service-using and street homeless, and an add-on to a national survey to obtain interview data with doubled-up households.

Other Designs

A variety of other designs were described, each of which gives up something in coverage, either of parts of the population or of required information, in exchange for cost reductions. Four other designs are presented, including:

- The minimal variation of dropping add-on questions to an on-going national survey (and losing the ability to identify clearly the "precariously housed" among the doubled-up population, and to describe their children's educational needs and living arrangements).

- Dropping all original data collection through interviews with sheltered and street homeless, relying on shelter provider reports instead (and losing information about the non-sheltered homeless, as well as information on school attendance and barriers).

COST ESTIMATES FOR ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS

Cost estimates for each component of a national study are given; then the total estimated cost of several designs are computed. Components include:

- Design and instrument development
- Stand-alone interview study of homeless service-using parents
- Addition to the interview study to find "street" homeless families
- Data collection on local housing, employment and other conditions, in the communities where homeless people are interviewed
- Adding special questions on homeless experiences, school attendance and barriers to an on-going national survey such as the Current Population Survey, the American Housing Survey, or the Survey of Income and Program Participation
- Projections from on-going national surveys, without any additional questions
- Supplementary interviews with sheltered families
- Analysis and reports.

The most complete design presented, Option 1a, includes the following components and costs:

Option 1a: Primary data collection with service-using and street homeless, plus add-on to national on-going survey to get doubled-up

Stand-alone Study	
Design, instrument development, OMB	$80,000 - 90,000
Data collection for national estimates	1.56 million
Data collection, local conditions	$50,000 - 60,000
Analysis and reports	$250,000 - 300,000
	$1.94 - 2.01 million
Add-on to Ongoing Survey	
Design, instrument development, OMB	$30,000 - 35,000
Data collection (using one of the following):	
American Housing Survey	$50,000 - 100,000
Survey of Income and Program Participation	$25,000 - 50,000
Current Population Survey	$150,000 - 300,000
Analysis and reports	$70,000 - 90,000
	$125,000 - 425,000
OPTION 1A, TOTAL	**$2.06 - 2.44 million**

A relatively inexpensive alternative, but one that sacrifices all information about the street homeless and school attendance and barriers information about the doubled-up, is Option 2b. It includes the following components and costs:

Option 2b: Analysis of CHAP/CHAS reports, projections from national survey data, interviews with sheltered families.

Analysis of CHAP/CHAS reports, including telephone verification	$50,000 - 75,000
Projections from existing national survey data	$70,000 - 90,000
Interviews with sheltered families to get school attendance and barriers	$200,000 - 300,000
OPTION 2B, TOTAL	**$320,000 - 465,000**

SPECIAL STUDY TO ENUMERATE HOMELESS STREET YOUTH

Rationale

Many researchers conducting homeless interview studies strongly advise that homeless street youth are not likely to be captured with the commonly used approaches to counting and interviewing the homeless that work with adults. Some of the difficulties and differences in finding and enumerating youths include:

- Youths frequent different parts of town than adult homeless;
- Youths often avoid service facilities, or use different services if they use any at all;
- Youths avoid interviewers or other adults, because they know that adults may report them to child protection or juvenile authorities;
- Youths often travel in groups, which are difficult for adults to approach and speak with unless they are known to someone in the group.

Because of these difficulties and differences, far too many youth would be missed if the search for them is part of the same study that counts and interviews adult homeless. Therefore we have approached developing a design to count homeless street youth as a separate study, and have also priced the effort separately.

Cost

National stand-alone study of youth	$ 2.66 million
Instrument development	$80,000 - 90,000
Analysis and reports	$250,000 - 300,000
TOTAL	2.99 - 3.05 million

GETTING TO ANNUAL ESTIMATES FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND SOME YOUTH

We have not proposed any data collection method to get annual unduplicated estimates. The key difficulty in developing accurate annual counts is duplication. It is extremely time-consuming to get accurate counts, unduplicated both within and between agencies, of homeless people who use services. Only a few jurisdictions in the country have the data systems to do this, and all use centralized computer resources with terminals in the service delivery agencies. No jurisdiction has a method to obtain unduplicated annual counts of those homeless who do not use services, whether they are "street" homeless or doubled-up. Nor is any jurisdiction, or any special study, likely to implement such a method; the expenditure required, in both staff time and money, would be too great.

Therefore, we propose to rely on projections from accurate point-in-time estimates to obtain annual estimates, based on two data sources:

a. Data collected from interviews with homeless respondents;

b. Data from four or more systems in the country that can produce both point-in-time and accurate unduplicated-across-and-within-agency annual counts.

THE TIMING OF A NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION EFFORT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The following is a realistic schedule for obtaining the required data through a stand-alone study, if performed entirely by the Department of Education. This schedule shows that ED could not meet its current Congressional deadline of December 1992. Instead, Congress could expect a preliminary report from a stand-alone Department of Education study by winter 1994 at the earliest:

- o 12-1-91 Legislation passes authorizing study and appropriating funds
- o 7-1-92 Department of Education issues Request for Proposals to conduct study (7 months)
- o 11-1-92 Department of Education awards contract; work begins (4 months)
- o 4-31-93 Design, instrument development and OMB clearance completed (6 months)
- o 7-31-93 Sampling, interviewer recruitment and training completed (6 months, overlapping with design and instrument development)
- o 11-30-93 Field work (data collection) completed (4 months)
- o 12-31-93 Clean data tape delivered (1 month)
- o 2-28-94 Data editing, cleaning, consolidation, preparation completed (2 months)
- o 4-30-94 Simple frequencies and cross-tabulations available (2 months)
- o 8-31-94 More complex analyses and final report available (4 months)

ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

FINAL REPORT

Martha R. Burt

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and its subsequent reauthorizations provided limited funding through the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to states to document the number of homeless children and youth within their jurisdiction and estimate their need for educational and other services. The legislation mandated that a coordinator for education of homeless children and youth be established in each state. These coordinators had the responsibility to report the numbers of homeless children and youth requiring services in their state during FY88 and FY89, and to identify and address barriers that prevented these children and youth from attending school.

ED and State Coordinator Activities

To provide assistance to the state coordinators, ED held technical assistance sessions at which they discussed procedures for counting, and to improve the counting process; and issued guidelines, developed with state assistance, to help state coordinators in their task of locating, identifying and counting homeless children and youth. In addition, the Department of Education issued a contract to provide technical assistance to state coordinators in fulfilling the legislative mandate. State education agencies (SEAs) have struggled to fulfill their mandate, with varied

results. In 1989, the Department of Education submitted to Congress the results of 1988 state efforts. Summarizing state estimates, the Department reported that approximately 220,000 school-age children had been homeless in 1988. Fourteen states also reported numbers of homeless pre-school children, adding at least 33,000 to the 220,000 figure. The state estimates for 1989 yielded totals of 215,000 to 273,000 school-aged children.

Difficulties Encountered

The Department of Education noted in both of its reports that the sophistication of the methods used by states to obtain their estimates varied greatly, as did the probable completeness and accuracy of the estimates. This finding is true of state efforts in both FY88 and FY89. Methods used, either alone or in combination, included:

1. Exclusive reliance on information from shelter providers, obtained either by telephone or through a mail survey (this information was sometimes for a single night, sometimes the average of repeated single nights, and sometimes cumulative over time);
2. Mail surveys of many types of providers, with very different response rates;
3. Reports from school districts and individual schools;
4. Over-time reporting from service agencies, including health and welfare agencies as well as homeless-specific agencies;
5. A random probability survey of elementary school teachers;
6. Opinions of local experts (averaged);
7. A school-based computer system with a special code for homeless children.

A review of the state reports indicates that estimates within states may be inaccurate due to:

- o Incomplete reporting;

- Poor or non-existent records of the reporting agencies;
- Different operational definitions of homelessness among informants;
- An inability to produce unduplicated numbers both within agencies and between agencies;
- An inability of some states to produce annual counts at all;
- Varied and unvalidated methods used to extrapolate annual counts from available data.

Despite the effort that has gone into conducting these statewide counts, and the technical assistance and improved methods during the second year of counting, the results are still highly inconsistent across states, and their degree of accuracy cannot be estimated. The difficulties plaguing the within-state estimates, coupled with methodological differences among states, makes any summary or comparison across states difficult and unreliable.

1990 McKinney Act Amendments

The problems states encountered in developing reliable and accurate estimates of their homeless children and youth prompted legislation requiring that the Department of Education develop several alternative approaches that could be implemented nationally, to "conduct a study to determine the best means of identifying, locating, and counting homeless children and youth for the purposes of this subtitle" (P.L. 101-645, Section 724 (b) (2) (A)). The legislation further specified that:

> (B) The study conducted under subparagraph (A) shall consider--
>
> (i) the appropriate definition of the terms 'homeless child' and 'homeless youth';

(ii) the experience of the 1990 Census in identifying, locating, and counting homeless children and youth;

(iii) appropriate methodologies for identifying, locating, and counting such children and youth, including using schools, shelters, and other social service agencies to collect data; and

(iv) the projected accuracy of the methodologies identified in clause (iii), and the costs associated with the use of each methodology;
to determine the number of homeless children and youth in the United States to create as accurate an account as possible of the number, location, and living circumstances of such children and youth, including the number of such children and youth that are attending school regularly, part-time, or not at all, and reasons for the nonattendance of such children and youth.

The Purpose of this Report

In carrying out this statutory responsibility, the Department of Education turned to the Urban Institute. Specifically, the Department asked the Urban Institute to develop methodologies for:

1. A one-time count of homeless children and youth, including shelter and other housed individuals, as well as runaway and other youth not housed in institutional locations. The count should provide both national as well as state estimates, and estimates in the 30 municipalities in the country with the expected greatest concentrations of homeless children and youth.

   (a) including precariously housed children and youth (see p. 11 for definition of "precariously housed);

   (b) not including precariously housed children and youth.

2. Estimating the numbers of children and youth who, at some time during the calendar year, become homeless, as outlined in 1 above.

   (a) including precariously housed children and youth;

   (b) not including precariously housed children and youth.

3. Making the same estimates as in 1 and 2 above, but only for a national total and state totals for the 20 states with the expected largest number of homeless children and youth.

4. For each of the above estimates, a breakout of the number of children estimated to be attending school full-time, part-time or not attending school at all.

5. For each of the above, analysis of the projected accuracy of the data the method can be expected to yield, and the costs associated with each method.

6. Obtain information about the living arrangements of homeless children and youth--that is, estimates of numbers of children in public shelters, private shelters, runaway youth facilities, in the streets, and in other locations.

Consultation

In compliance with statutory requirements for maximum consultation with concerned groups and agencies, an Advisory Committee was convened for this project (see Appendix for members). Members included representatives of state coordinators of homeless education services for children and youth, state education agencies, local education agencies, local government agencies responsible for homeless services, and advocacy groups concerned with homeless children and youth. The Committee met at the beginning of the project to discuss definitions and study options, and again to review the first draft of this report. Representatives of the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and of Health and Human Services also attended these meetings and reviewed all draft materials. ED's ability to provide this report in a timely manner was made possible through the cooperation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, and the Interagency Council on the Homeless. The Bureau of the Census also contributed, by making available the services of a professional sampling statistician to develop the sampling designs. ED and HUD used an interagency agreement to transfer ED funds into a basic ordering

agreement that HUD maintains with the Urban Institute. Thus ED was able to access Urban Institute expertise quickly to meet its mandated reporting requirement.

What This Report Does

This report presents several alternative approaches to obtaining consistent national estimates of the number of homeless children and youth, their school attendance patterns, barriers to attendance, and living arrangements, plus similar estimates for each state and for the 30 largest municipalities, as requested by P.L. 101-645. In addition to presenting the methodologies, the report also provides estimates of their cost. The assumption behind both the methods and the costs is that the research will be conducted by the federal government, either directly or through contracts. These are not methods that the Department will ask states to implement. However, any states that wish to adapt these methods to their own use are free to do so.

What This Report Does Not Do

The approaches and research designs presented in this report are meant to be implemented by the U.S. Department of Education, either alone or in conjunction with other federal agencies. There is no expectation that states would be asked to conduct research based on these approaches. To pursue a national data collection strategy, certain uniformities must be observed in all parts of the country. One must request information from schools either everywhere or nowhere. One must adopt a consistent time limit and other criteria for identifying when a doubled-up situation should be considered a homeless situation. One must develop a consistent approach for obtaining information on school attendance. Any state, pursuing its own goals in counting and providing

services for homeless children and youth, can be much more flexible in its approaches than can a national survey. Nothing said in this report should be taken to mean that states are limited in any way from adopting their own approaches to meet their needs.

DEFINITIONS

The first requirement of any counting effort is clear definitions. One must know whom to include in the count and whom to exclude--hence the issue of definitions. But it is very difficult to draw the line establishing exactly who is homeless and who is not. Our approach to definitions of homeless children and youth is to identify different segments of the population of children and youth who might be considered homeless.[1] We have followed Advisory Committee suggestions

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1The McKinney Act defines as homeless: (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or, (c) a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (P.L. 100-77). The Act's definition does not provide the level of specificity that is necessary to design a data collection methodology and write interview questions. For example, there is some question as to whether a person must lack all three aspects of nighttime residence (fixed, regular, and adequate), or whether a lack of any one or two aspects is sufficient to classify a person as homeless. HUD operates on the assumption that all three must be lacking. But an alternative interpretation of the statute might count all people who live in fixed, regular but inadequate housing as homeless (in 1983, 7.7 million households, including 3.5 million families with children, lived in inadequate housing). The Act also is not specific about which people in doubled-up situations should be considered homeless. Nursing homes are institutions, many of whose residents fit the Act's category 2.b., but most would not consider these residents homeless. Many youth placed temporarily in holding facilities such as lock-ups, jails or juvenile detention centers <u>are</u> homeless, but the Act excludes correctional facilities from being considered as "institutions." Therefore this report supplies more specific definitional parameters.

in circumscribing each segment of the population to be assessed. Some segments may not be considered "homeless" by every interested party (e.g., some doubled-up circumstances). We will supply methods for learning about the segments; different users may group the segments as they choose, and justify their choices, for policy or planning purposes.

Components of the Homeless Children and Youth Population

Specifying the population segments clearly is especially important in this work because the same data collection methods will not work for all segments. The important segments of the population were identified as:

- homeless children with their families, in shelters, including pregnant teenagers and adults;
- homeless children with their families, "on the streets" (sleeping in places not meant for human habitation);
- precariously housed children with or without their parents;
- homeless children in institutions, such as hospitals, foster care, treatment facilities;
- runaway and homeless youth (youth unaccompanied by a parent or other responsible adult), including pregnant and parenting youth.

When to Count. The most desirable time to conduct a study, in terms of identifying the maximum number of people who are homeless at a given point in time, would be the last week of a winter month--either January or February. In some states shelters are already closing by March. The last week of the month is expected to produce the highest count of families, and hence of

children, since anyone running out of money at the end of the month and using shelters sporadically at such times would be in shelters then.

Ages to Include, and Age Breaks. ED is technically responsible only for "school-age" children and youth, and in past data collection efforts the Department has asked states to count only these children. However, "school-age" varies state-by-state, with some including children as young as 3 and others including youth as old as 21. For the purpose of a national study with a consistent methodology across states, it makes most sense to collect information on all people age 20 and younger. It would be most desirable to have single-year breaks--that, is the number of children under 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc. If this is not possible, then the following breaks or age groupings were recommended: 0-4; 5-12, 13-15, 16-17, 18-20.

Children with their Families in Shelters

Any child who is with a parent or other relative in a shelter is assumed to be homeless. The most critical element of this definition is what counts as "a shelter." The numbers of children considered homeless will be different depending on what types of facilities or arrangements are included in the concept of "a shelter."

What is a shelter?

- All shelters for the homeless should be included, whether emergency or transitional.
- All domestic violence shelters should be included.
- All shelters for runaway and homeless youth should be included, and any youth staying at such a shelter should be included, whether classified by the shelter as runaway or as homeless. However, the identity of each youth as a runaway or as homeless should be recorded so that distinctions can be made by analysts to whom they are important. Studies indicate that the ratio of runaway to homeless youth using centers is somewhere

between 2 to 1 and 4 to 1. Including all runaways in a count will significantly increase the estimate of population size.

- Anyone receiving assistance to stay in motels or hotels through vouchers or other payment arrangements because they are homeless should be counted as "in a shelter."

- If drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs have a minimum client age of 18, they will be irrelevant to the task of counting homeless children and youth. For residential rehabilitation programs that serve children or youth, those that draw their participants from among homeless people (e.g., Salvation Army alcohol recovery programs) should count as the equivalent of transitional shelters. However, if most or all participants in a rehabilitation program enter the program from permanent housing arrangements, they should not be counted as homeless and the program should not be counted as a shelter. The facility would then be treated as in the following bullet.

- In general, half-way houses, maternity programs, and other transitional or treatment institutions for children and youth should not be counted as shelters or their residents as homeless. If one wishes to include anyone in these facilities as homeless (e.g., juveniles in detention facilities, group homes, or maternity shelters), the best way to do so is to take their status at either intake or release (i.e., intake form says "unknown" or "none" for address, or release form says "release to--unknown" or words to that effect).

- In general, people paying for their own room in a hotel or motel would not be considered homeless, nor would any children they have with them. In the extreme circumstance that such families have applied for emergency shelter and have been told to use the last of their money on a few nights' lodging before being eligible for shelter or voucher arrangements, they would be considered homeless.

Children with their Families in Other Places, Not Meant for Human Habitation

At issue are which locations to include or exclude, since excluding a location means that people there will not be counted among the homeless.

Abandoned Buildings

- All children with their families, and any youth on their own, who sleep in abandoned buildings should be counted as homeless. This includes squatter situations.

Vehicles

- Anyone sleeping in cars, vans, trucks, and other vehicles parked on public streets or other public spaces should be considered homeless. People sleeping in vehicles parked in campgrounds or parks, or on private property such as a farm, including recreational vehicles and campers, should only be included in the count if they have no permanent place to live elsewhere.

Migrants

- Migrant households should not be considered homeless, as a class. However, if people who work as migrants are found in homeless shelters or on the streets, where others would be considered homeless, **and do not have a permanent place to live elsewhere,** they should also be counted as homeless.

Children in Precarious Housing Situations at Serious Risk of Homelessness, With or Without their Own Parents

The critical issue here is what criteria to use in considering a child or a child's family as living in situation that puts them at serious risk of homelessness.

Criteria. To be considered precarious (at serious risk of homelessness), the family's or child's current housing circumstances must:

- Have arisen from an inability to pay for one's own housing due to an emergency or crisis; and
- Be of short anticipated duration. The criterion recommended was--doubled-up living arrangement, caused by an emergency situation, of less that 60 days total anticipated duration.

There are likely to be certain extreme circumstances under which children living in conventional dwellings, with or without their parents, would be considered "homeless" rather than simply "precariously housed." In addition to the criteria that define the precariously housed, other criteria that might identify a child or household as "homeless" might include the following:

- o No clear plans to find secure and stable housing; and
- o No financial resources to find stable housing.

For example, a family might have stayed for brief periods in several other locations before coming to their present situation, may be unable to stay in their present situation for more than a few days, and may have exhausted their network of friends and family. These conditions, coupled with the criteria for being considered precariously housed, would meet the criteria for being considered homeless in a doubled-up situation -- no clear plans and no financial resources to find stable housing.

Children in Institutions

Children in institutions such as foster care, hospitals, elsewhere in the child protection system, residential treatment facilities, and so on, are so called because they occupy the middle ground (gray area) between the clearly homeless and the clearly housed. Because a few of their residents may meet the criteria of homelessness although most will not, this category is especially difficult to conceptualize. The Advisory Committee discussed the most fruitful way to assess how many children there might be in these institutions who might be considered homeless or affected by the homelessness of a parent. Their final recommendation was twofold. It was agreed that:

- o Locating and identifying homeless children in these institutional settings was not feasible for a national study, given the small number of homeless children expected to be in such circumstances.
- o If one wanted to learn something about these children, a more fruitful approach would be to gather data from their homeless parents using methods for counting and interviewing the general homeless population, rather than by trying to get all the relevant institutions to identify which of their children were homeless.

Therefore, in our definition children in institutions will be considered homeless if:

- Their residence in the institution arose because of a parent's homelessness; and
- If it is of short duration or its duration is uncertain due to the uncertain legal relationship of responsibility between the parent and child; and
- If responsibility for their care and welfare has not (yet) been assumed by a foster care agency.

Youth on their Own, in Shelters or Other Places

Runaway or Homeless. Any youth found in a shelter for runaway and homeless youth should be counted as homeless, regardless of how he or she is classified by the shelter (as runaway or as homeless). Any unaccompanied minor found sleeping in any locations such as streets, or other public places should be counted as homeless if an adult in the same circumstances would be counted as homeless.

Definitions of Runaway and Homeless Youth. The Department of Health and Human Services differentiates between runaway and homeless youth for the purpose of separate reporting. HHS' official definitions are:

Runaway	A person under 18 years of age who absents himself or herself from home or place of legal residence without the permission of parents or legal guardian. (45 CFR 1351.1(k)).
Homeless	A person under 18 years of age who is in need of services and without a place of shelter where he or she receives supervision and care. (45 CFR 1351.1(f)).

These definitions were developed to serve the programmatic purposes of the Department of Health and Human Services, but they present some problems for those concerned with educational services, and with fulfilling the mandate of the McKinney Act to assure that homeless children and youth attend school and receive the educational services they need. Needed educational services may be identical for two youths, one classified as a runaway by the HHS definitions, and one classified as homeless. Without the services both youths may drop out of school and be unable to return. Yet the Homeless Services Coordinator for educational services can only assist the youth classified as homeless. In order to assure services to every youth who needs them, we will not differentiate between runaway and homeless youth in any count done for the purpose of fulfilling the intention of the McKinney Act.[2] Instead of the HHS definitions, we propose to use a more inclusive definition of homeless and runaway youth, and collect information about these youths that will allow a finer differentiation of this segment of the homeless population along the lines of potentially needed services. The definition we propose is:

> A youth, under 18, who has slept at least one night during the past 30 days in unconventional locations, including those not meant for human habitation, without supervision of a legally responsible adult.

2The HHS definitions also present other problems. Take, for example, the situation of a teenager who has run away from a home situation where he or she was physically or sexually abused by a parent. This youth is technically a runaway, since he or she has a home and parent(s), and is absent without their permission. Even if the parent(s) want the youth back, the home is unsafe for the youth, and harmful. This youth's circumstances and service needs are not substantially different from those of a youth who has been thrown out of a parent's house, yet the first is classified by the HHS definitions as a runaway, and the second as homeless. If the HHS classifications prevailed, a Homeless Services Coordinator for educational services could help the second youth but not the first under the McKinney Act.

In addition to identifying the youth of interest using this definition, any study for the Department of Education would want to collect data about the number of nights the youth spent in these unconventional locations during the past month; their recency (whether last night, within the last week, or within the last month); the reason the youth left home or last legal residence; the length of time the youth has been on the streets; educational history and school attendance; barriers to school attendance; services used; and services needed. With this information, researchers, homeless education service coordinators, and other service providers can determine the youths' educational needs, and can also determine the need for other relevant services, such as reconciliation services if a return to parents is viable, or alternative housing arrangements if no safe and secure home is available. For those youth using runaway and homeless youth centers, data should also be collected on the youth's classification by the shelter, using HHS definitions, as runaway or as homeless. This approach will provide the Department of Education with the maximum amount of information, and enable cross-classifications of youth by HHS definitions and by their actual conditions and service needs.

Institutions. The Advisory Committee discussed at length how to deal with people in institutions. The discussion included consideration of holding facilities such as lock-ups, jails, detention and other juvenile justice facilities as well as non-criminal-justice institutions. This discussion grew out of our concern for the great difficulty of locating and counting runaway and homeless youth, and a recognition that their encounters with institutions might provide a point of access for counting that is not as necessary with adult homeless people.

Following the committee recommendation, our definition of runaway and homeless youth will include those temporarily residing in holding facilities such as lock-ups, juvenile detention

facilities and county jails, if their address at entry is "unknown," or "street," or a shelter address, in addition to those using the more usual shelters and drop-in services. This decision was made despite the fact that the McKinney Act specifically excludes individuals in penal institutions from consideration as homeless. There are two reasons for this recommendation. First, youth are often placed in these facilities not because they have committed offenses, but because there is no other place to put them. In addition, in winter some youths commit crimes so they can get into detention, and thus out of the weather. These facilities thus serve much the same capacity as a group home or other institution that would be included in the McKinney definition, and the Committee felt their homeless youth residents should be included in any count of homeless children and youth. The second reason is totally pragmatic--for youth, lock-ups, detention centers, and the county jail may be the only places in which one can actually make contact. An Advisory Committee member remarked that youth outreach workers in his community come to the detention facility when they cannot find their clients on the streets.

At juvenile justice institutions as with other institutions, the committee recommended that reliance on homeless status recorded on either intake or release documents would be sufficient for identifying youth as homeless--i.e., that a survey of youth in the midst of an institutional stay was not necessary, and might actually be misleading. Our proposed definition follows these recommendations. Youth in detention or other CJS institutions will be counted as homeless if at entry or discharge their address is listed as "unknown" or "street."

Youth in Conventional Dwellings. Youth staying with family or friends in conventional dwellings should only be considered homeless if their circumstances are extremely precarious (the same criteria would apply as for children in conventional dwellings--see above). Thus several

youths sharing an apartment, for which each contributes to the rent, would not be homeless. However, a youth sleeping in his or her pimp's apartment, or a youth "crashing" for one or two nights on a friend's or relative's floor, with neither plans nor resources for stable and secure housing, would be considered homeless.

Other Information Needs

In addition to point-in-time estimates of the number of homeless children and youth, Congress requested annual estimates (i.e., the number of children and youth who are homeless at some time during a year's period), and information about school attendance and barriers to attendance. These information needs further complicate the task of developing a research design, since they are unlikely to be available from any single source. Only parents are likely to be a consistent source of school attendance data and perceptions of barriers to attendance. Reliable annual prevalence data that unduplicate both within and across agencies are only available from a few jurisdictions, and establishing systems to generate such data where they do not exist would be very time-consuming and expensive. Methods to satisfy these information needs are discussed below.

DATA SOURCES AND INFORMATION NEEDS

Data Sources x Population Segments

What types of data might yield information about each segment of the population of homeless children and youths? A wide array of data sources exists, but unfortunately no single

data source is likely to cover all of the population segments of interest. Exhibit 1 illustrates the matches and mismatches of potential data sources and homeless population segments.

Exhibit 1 displays columns representing the segments of the population of homeless children and youth, as defined earlier. The rows of Exhibit 1 show the possible sources of information from which one might estimate the size of the population segments. These include:

1. Direct interviews with homeless persons found at shelter and other service locations;
2. Direct interviews with homeless persons found "on the streets;"
3. Interviews with household members drawn from a sample of conventional dwelling units in very low-income neighborhoods;
4. Interviews with service providers, to get their estimates as key informants or local experts;
5. Data from city or state estimates;
6. Data from institutional records; and
7. Estimates based on data from on-going national surveys not designed to address the issue of homelessness (e.g., the Current Population Survey (CPS), or the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)).

Direct Interviews with Homeless Service Users

Direct interviews with homeless service users (row 1 of Exhibit 1) can yield point-in-time information about the following segments of the population of homeless children and youth (with some additional information from the interviews that allows one to project an estimate of annual prevalence):

- Homeless children with their parents, in shelters;

Exhibit 1

Potential Data Sources x Population Segments

Data Sources \	In Shelters	"On Streets"	Doubled-up	"Gray Area"	Youth
1. Interviews: homeless service users	yes	yes, for people who use non-shelter homeless services	children of service users, left in conventional d.u.'s	children of service users, left in conventional d.u.'s	yes, if they use shelters or other services
2. Interviews: homeless on streets and other hidden locations	inap.	possible, but don't recommend because so few children	inap.	children of homeless interviewed in street and other hidden locations	possible. would require search of abandoned buildings
3. Interviews: residents of conventional dwelling units	inap.	inap.	would get info on doubled-up families and children	inap.	would get info on doubled-up youth
4. Service provider estimates	point-in-time, and possibly also annual estimates. consistency varies	inap.	possible but unlikely, from non-shelter providers	inap.	yes, from runaway and homeless youth centers
5. City or state estimates	point-in-time, and possible also annual estimates. consistency varies	possible but unlikely	possible but unlikely	inap.	maybe, for runaway and homeless youth center clients
6. Institutional records	inap.	inap.	inap.	hospitals, CPS agencies, residential trtmt.	juvenile detention centers
7. Routine national surveys	inap.	inap.	projections from CPS, AHS, SIPP, Census	inap.	inap.

- Homeless children with their parents, on the streets and in other hidden locations, to the extent they occasionally use soup kitchens, food pantries, drop-in centers and health care programs for the homeless, and other service sites;

- Homeless children in doubled-up situations, either with their parents, or separated from their parents due to their parents' homelessness but living with relatives or friends in conventional housing, to the extent their parents or other adults with whom they live occasionally use shelters, soup kitchens, food pantries, drop-in centers and health care programs for the homeless, and other service sites;

- Homeless children separated from their parents and residing in institutions, foster care, etc., to the extent their parents are part of a service sampling frame;

- Homeless youth who use shelters or other services.

Direct Interviews with Homeless Persons Found "On the Streets"

Direct interviews with homeless persons found on the streets or in other places not meant for human habitation (row 2) can yield point in-time information (again with the ability to project annual estimates) about:

- Homeless children with their parents, on the streets and in other hidden locations. (Most studies that did street sweeps found no parent-child families literally "on the streets;" the remainder found only a handful of children. This source is therefore likely to be quite expensive in relation to its payoff in information gained, and we do not recommend it in a study focused on homeless children.);

- Homeless youth, to the extent they can be found (from reports of researchers who have tried, homeless youth appear to be quite difficult to locate and even more difficult to interview in the usual approach to street homeless research).

Direct Interviews with Household Members
Drawn from a Sample of Conventional Dwelling
Units in Very Low-income Neighborhoods

Interviewing household members who live in conventional dwellings in very low-income neighborhoods (row 3) is the most direct way to obtain an estimate of the doubled-up population

that might be considered homeless, and the number of children and youths who find themselves in these circumstances. The estimates would be point-in-time, but again, one could obtain information in the interviews that would permit projections of annual numbers. This method, however, would yield information only about the doubled-up segment of the population, and would have to be used in conjunction with other methods to get a picture of the whole population.

This approach has been tried in a recent Houston study,[3] with considerable success. In addition, the American Housing Survey (AHS) may soon produce some national data relevant to the doubled-up homeless and recently homeless. The AHS samples dwelling units, is conducted biannually, and produces housing-related data for the nation as a whole and for 44 large metropolitan areas. The AHS has added questions to its 1991 interview format to obtain some data relevant to homelessness. For every resident who has moved into the dwelling unit within the past 12 months, the new AHS questions will determine whether the resident spent some part of the past year homeless, and if so, how long and under what circumstances (i.e., in a shelter, doubled-up, etc.).

Interviews with Service Providers

Interviews or other forms of data collection with service providers (row 4) can produce numerical estimates of varying accuracy for the number of homeless children and youth who use the provider's services. Estimates for the sheltered population (either families, or runaway and homeless youth) are likely to be the most accurate. Estimates of street homeless and of doubled-up homeless are almost certain to contain bias, of unknown magnitude or direction. Social service

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3The Resource Group, Homelessness in Houston, Harris County and Gulf Coast United Way Service Delivery Areas: Report of Data Collection and Analysis. Austin, Texas, The Resource Group, 1989)

agencies and homeless service providers other than shelters (e.g., soup kitchens, drop-in centers) are even less likely than shelters to be able to provide accurate counts of their homeless clients; what they do provide are likely to contain an unknown amount of duplication and bias. Therefore Figure 1 indicates that no good estimate of these population segments can be obtained from service providers.

Most service providers can give an estimate only of the average number of persons who use their services daily or nightly. Some service providers can also supply an idea of the number of service units (e.g., nights of shelter, meals, health care visits) they deliver over an extended period such as a month or a year. Very few service providers can supply counts over a period of time that are unduplicated for a month or a year within their own agency; even fewer systems can unduplicate between agencies for any time period, including one day.

Data from City or State Estimates

Data from city or state estimates (row 5) have the same advantages and disadvantages as direct provider estimates, and almost always rely on reports from service providers. An additional source of information may be counts based on payments for hotel/motel/apartment vouchers made by cities or other jurisdictions to provide emergency shelter for homeless families (and some singles). Because they are based on money and subjected to accounting and quality control procedures, counts based on payments are likely to be quite accurate. We list city or state estimates as a source distinct from service providers (row 4) because city or state officials have already done the work of assembling the information; getting it from them will be less expensive than collecting it directly from providers. However, one would lose the advantage of having a

sense of the quality and accuracy of the provider data, which one would get through interviews with providers.

Data from Institutional Records

Data from institutional records (row 6) such as foster care agencies, hospitals (e.g., for "boarder babies"), group homes, or criminal justice holding facilities (where youth may be placed because no other facilities are available, rather than because they have committed crimes), would yield information about the homeless children and youth living in such settings. But the effort required to survey institutions of this type, the probable inability of many to identify homeless children in their care, the possible unwillingness of some to convey the information even if they have it, and the probable small number of children involved, all caused this project's Advisory Committee to recommend that no direct effort be made to use this data source. Rather, information about children in these settings could be obtained from interviews with their parents, as described above.

The only exception to this recommendation pertained to lock-up, jail, and detention center records for runaway and homeless youth. It is notoriously difficult to find and count these youth, which is the primary reason that we have no adequate national estimate of their numbers. Places they do show up with regularity are lock-ups, jails, and juvenile detention centers--in fact, youth caseworkers often come to detention to try to find their clients. For this special segment of the homeless population there is some good reason for gathering data from institutional records, either at entry or at exit, about the youths' homeless status.

Estimates Based on Data from On-going National Surveys

On-going national surveys (row 7), such as the 1990 Census, the CPS, the SIPP, or the AHS, are not designed to address the issue of homelessness. Nevertheless they could be used as an alternative to conducting a special household survey to get at the doubled-up population (such as the method in row 3). These national surveys have limited relevant data, but could be used to make projections to this one segment of the homeless population--people living precariously in conventional housing and at serious risk of becoming homeless. They also suffer from the limitation of not having any information about children's school attendance, barriers to attendance, or any information about homeless children and youth who do not sleep in conventional dwelling units.

From Exhibit 1 it should be clear that several data sources might provide the desired numbers of families, children and youth who use shelters and other services. It should be equally clear that only one or two data sources might provide data about the doubled-up population and the children in institutions. Coverage for the whole segment of runaway and homeless youth would also require the combined use of several data sources. The conclusion of this review is that to fulfill the Congressional mandate for information about all segments of the homeless children and youth population, several data sources and methodologies will be required.

Data Sources x Information Needs

The challenges of the Congressional request are not limited to providing estimates of the size of each segment of the homeless population. There are also issues surrounding the methods and data sources capable of supplying certain items of information specified by P.L. 101-645.

Exhibit 2
Potential Data Sources x Information Needs

Data Sources \	Point-in-time Estimates	Annual Estimates	Living Situation	School Attendance	Barriers to School Attend.
1. Interviews: homeless service users	yes	projections only	yes	yes	yes
2. Interviews: streets/other hidden sites	yes	projections only	yes	yes	yes
3. Interviews: res. of conv. dwelling units	yes	projections only	yes	yes	yes
4. Service provider estimates	yes, consistency varies	maybe	only reliably about sheltered people	not reliably	from shelters only, probably good enough
5. City or state estimates	yes, consistency varies	a few can do reliable unduplicated counts	only for those in shelters	no	maybe
6. Institutional records	maybe	maybe	only for the period of institutionalization	no	no
On-going National Surveys					
7a. No add-ons	yes, for doubled-up only	projections only	for doubled-up only	no	no
7b. With add-ons	yes, for doubled-up only	projections only	for doubled-up only	for doubled-up only	for doubled-up only

Obtaining annual estimates, school attendance information, and barriers to school attendance all present difficulties that will require alternative data collection methodologies.

Exhibit 2 describes the potential sources of specific information. A quick glance at Exhibit 2 indicates that the first three data sources, all involving original data collection through interviews with homeless people, are the only ways to ensure that each legislatively mandated piece of information is obtained consistently and reliably. The implications of Exhibits 1 and 2 taken together are that to completely fulfill the Congressional request, original data collection through interviews with homeless service users, street homeless and residents of conventional dwelling units will all be required. Further, a separate effort may be required if full information is to be gained for runaway and homeless youths.

Approaches Not Taken, and Why

In the legislation authorizing the present study, Congress specified that ED explore the feasibility of using data from the 1990 Census, schools, shelters, and other social service agencies as the basis for identifying, locating and counting homeless children and youth. Exhibits 1 and 2, and the accompanying discussion, presented some information about the adequacy of these data sources for the task at hand. Here we explain why we do not think these data sources provide an adequate, cost-efficient basis for developing national data, and describe the advantages and disadvantages of each potential data source.

It is very clear from the experiences of state coordinators during the two years when they tried to identify, locate and count all children and youth experiencing homelessness in their state, that this is an extremely difficult task. State coordinators have used different approaches within

their own state, and the differences between states in data collection techniques are even more varied. Even with extensive technical assistance, repeated refinements of definitions and of techniques, many states still cannot reliably and accurately produce an unduplicated annual count of all homeless children and youth, or even an unduplicated count for a single point in time. One option for national data collection is for ED to invest more program funds in training, technical assistance and computer support for state coordinators, and in synthesis of state efforts. ED believes this option would divert state coordinators from their primary obligation to deliver educational services (for which they have the greatest skill), into data collection activities for which they are not trained. Further, this option would result in higher costs, and produce data that inspire less confidence, than conducting a systematic national study as recommended in this report.

The following is an assessment of the major difficulties with each of the data sources identified in the 1990 McKinney Act amendments (P.L. 101-645):

1990 Census Data

- During the Census Bureau's S-night homeless count, 1 of every 6 persons encountered in shelters received the Census long form, which asked about school enrollment (but not about attendance or barriers). If the person receiving the long form was a child, he or she presumably answered the school enrollment question. However, enough reports of irregularities were received (e.g., adults being substituted for children when a child was randomly selected to receive the long form) that it is not clear how much confidence can be placed on estimates of school enrollment based on S-night data collection. Census will be evaluating the quality of these data in the future;

- The Census done in households might provide some pertinent information, but only about precariously housed persons who are members of households in conventional dwelling units, based on data from households who completed the long Census form (about 1 in 6 households). Their level of risk of homelessness would have to be inferred from their doubled-up status, income, and other attributes. Other than an estimate of population size, the long form could provide information about school enrollment for every household member, including children. However, no data would be available

about school attendance or barriers to attendance, which are much more important for ED's purpose than enrollment;

- In the S-night homeless count in shelters, data were not collected by household unit (parents and their children); thus a count of children is possible, but households would have to be reconstructed by inference.

- Virtually no children were encountered in the S-night "visible in the streets" component. In this respect the Census experience mirrors every other study of the homeless street segment; therefore regardless of the completeness or incompleteness of the "visible" component of S-night, very few children will have been overlooked.

- The data will not be available until late 1992, so their ultimate utility cannot be assessed.

Shelters

- No information about the doubled-up would be available;

- No individual-level data on any children would be available;

- Providers probably do not know about school attendance in any detail;

- Providers might be able to name barriers to school attendance, but could not give percentages of children affected by those barriers;

- Many shelters do not cooperate in state counting efforts;

- Serious difficulties would arise in producing an accurate count, because of problems with duplication both within and between agencies;

- Inconsistencies among states and local communities would exist in the types of shelters included in or excluded from the count.

Social Service Agencies

- Most agencies do not know which clients are homeless;

- Most agencies do not use a consistent definition of "precariously housed" to identify doubled-up households at serious risk of homelessness;

- Many agencies do not cooperate in a count;

- Agencies will not know about school attendance or barriers;

- Duplicate counting would jeopardize the accuracy of any count;
- Most of the literally homeless do not use these agencies (74 percent of the homeless in the Urban Institute study did not receive either AFDC or General Assistance, or Food Stamps or Supplemental Security Income).

Schools

- Schools will not know about the children and youth not in school;
- Most schools do not inquire into students' homeless status, and do not have any routine way to record homelessness in a student's file. Many schools prefer to ignore the problem. Only a few schools can systematically identify their enrolled homeless children or youth.
- Homeless children may change schools; school systems have no way to reduce or eliminate the duplicate counting that might result if the schools were to report the numbers of homeless children and youth they serve.
- School officials' perceptions of barriers to school attendance may be quite different than those of homeless parents or children;
- Schools may not cooperate in data collection efforts.

Advantages of Original Data Collection

The 1990 McKinney Act amendments (P.L. 101-645) expressed great concern with the educational needs, and the barriers to the fulfillment of those needs, of homeless children and youth. One might wonder whether homeless service providers, social service agencies, and local education officials could supply information on these topics sufficient to meet the statutory requirements, even if they could not reliably supply counts of homeless children and youth. Certainly the reports submitted to the Department of Education by state coordinators for the education of homeless children and youth have included a long list of barriers to educational

participation. If this information is as important as, or more important than, the actual counts of homeless children and youth, might not the state coordinators' reports be adequate to supply this "qualitative" information?

A stand-alone study using direct interviews with homeless parents offers a tremendous improvement over current approaches, for these "qualitative" data of most concern to Congress as well as for estimates of population size. With data from a national interview study, analysts could:

- Identify the proportions of homeless children and youth experiencing each type of educational deficit (these figures would be accurate for the nation as a whole, since they would be based on a nationally representative sample);
- Identify the proportions of homeless children and youth experiencing each type of educational barrier (also accurate for the nation as a whole);
- Estimate proportions of children with particular deficits or barriers for communities of different types, in different regions of the country or for rural versus suburban versus urban populations;
- Determine the associations between specific conditions of communities and of homeless households that produce different types of educational need, or different barriers to participation in education;
- Develop an analytic strategy for assessing each child's risk of experiencing particular educational problems and barriers.

The barriers identified through direct interviews with homeless parents might not be different from those articulated by service providers, but the level of analysis possible with data from a stand-alone study is significantly better than anything one could develop from provider or service agency data. The improvement comes from having data descriptive of individual families and children, rather than grouped or aggregate data. These improvements in analytic ability mean that a stand-alone study using interviews with homeless parents will give ED and each state

homeless education coordinator the ability to answer complex and sophisticated questions about homeless children and youth, and a much more precise and refined tool from which to design and implement policy.

THE IDEAL DESIGN, AND PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES

The ideal study to gather this information for the nation as a whole will be costly; a design that provides precise estimates for every state and the 30 largest municipalities as well will be very costly indeed. In this section we present a sketch of the ideal design, and then describe the alternatives, including some illustrative costs. The tradeoffs will be obvious--the more information, the more coverage of the whole population, and the more precision beyond the national level, the higher the costs.

The Ideal Design

The ideal design would:

1. Use original data collection through interviews with homeless service users, and homeless people in public places (data sources 1 and 2);
2. Use original data collection through interviews with residents of conventional dwelling units (data source 3);
3. Cover every segment of the population of interest using the same design and methodology, through direct contacts in all cases except for the children and youth in "gray area" institutions.
4. Sample enough communities to obtain reliable and accurate estimates for all 50 states and the 30 largest municipalities;
5. Obtain data through interviews about children's living situation, school attendance and barriers to attendance;
6. Obtain data from local school districts about average attendance, to which homeless children's attendance can be compared; and
7. Obtain point-in-time estimates and data from interviews to estimate an annual prevalence rate.

None of the designs we actually developed and estimated costs for is the ideal design. The first set of designs presented below are the most complete version. We omitted 2, above--original data collection through interviews with residents of conventional dwelling units--because adding questions to existing national surveys, which already interview the same population, is a much more cost-effective way to get the desired information. We modified 3, above, to exclude homeless street youth from the main study because the researchers who have tried to contact these youth all indicated that they are usually not in the same places as adult homeless, and different approaches are required to contact and interview them. Instead of including them in the main study, we developed a separate study and a separate price for the street segment of the homeless youth population. The other designs presented in Exhibit 3 are decreasingly expensive ways to obtain some of the information desired, but for each price reduction there is a concomitant reduction in what is learned.

The Most Complete Design

The most complete design involves primary data collection with service using and non-service using street homeless, plus additional questions attached to an on-going national survey such as the CPS, the SIPP, or the AHS. Among shelters, only those serving families or homeless women without children would be included in the service sites surveyed, to achieve maximum efficiency in the search for homeless children and youth. Shelters serving families will include children among their guests, by definition, and must be included in any research effort. Women homeless by themselves, in singles shelters, often were parenting immediately before becoming

Exhibit 3

Alternative Designs

	Segment	National	State	Cities	School Info.	Living Arrange.	Youth
1a. Primary data collection with service-using & street homeless	literally homeless	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	some
Add-on to national survey	doubled-up	yes	some	some	yes	yes	some
1b. Primary data collection with service-using & street homeless	literally homeless	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	some
National survey, no add-on	doubled-up	yes	some	some	no	yes	some
2a. Reports from shelter providers through CHAP/CHAS	literally homeless	yes	yes	yes	no	no	if use shelters
Add-on to national survey	doubled-up	yes	some	some	yes	yes	some
Small number of interviews with sheltered families	literally homeless	no	no	no	yes	no	no
2b. Reports from shelter providers through CHAP/CHAS	literally homeless	yes	yes	yes	no	no	if use shelters
National survey, no add-on	doubled-up	yes	some	some	no	yes	some
Small number of interviews with sheltered families	literally homeless	no	no	no	yes	no	no
3. Reports from shelter providers through CHAP/CHAS	literally homeless	yes	yes	yes	no	no	if use shelters
National survey, no add-on	doubled-up	yes	some	some	no	yes	some

homeless; interviews with them will yield information about the living arrangements and service needs of their children. Men homeless by themselves are very unlikely to have been parenting immediately prior to becoming homeless; therefore omitting shelters for single men from the study design is an efficient way to target resources toward the parts of the homeless population most likely to have children with them, or to know the whereabouts of children affected.

The coverage obtained through the most complete design is described in Exhibit 3, Option 1a, where it can be compared to other design alternatives. The primary data collection in Option 1a would cover the literally homeless, obtain estimates at the national, state and major municipality level, and gather the desired data about school attendance and barriers, children's living arrangements, and some data about homeless youth. The component involving an add-on to a national survey would obtain estimates for the doubled-up population that is at imminent risk of homelessness or could be considered homeless although sleeping in conventional dwelling units. This component would be able to provide estimates at the national level, at the level of the largest states and municipalities (which ones and how many vary depending on which national survey is involved), and would gather information about school attendance, etc. The primary data collection has been designed to achieve a 10 percent coefficient of variation, which will produce a 95 percent confidence interval of $\pm$ 19.6 percent of the estimate. This means that if the estimate were 80,000 homeless children, then 95 percent of the time the true number of children would be between 64,00 and 95,700. A 10 percent coefficient of variation is a standard of accuracy used by the Census Bureau for developing many of its designs.

Other Designs

Other designs are also displayed in Exhibit 3. Option 1b resembles Option 1a except that it does not involve homeless-specific questions added on to an on-going national survey. Without these homeless-specific add-on questions, Option 1b loses the ability to identify precariously housed/homeless doubled-up households except by inference from their household income and other characteristics, and will not be able to say anything about school attendance for precariously housed children.

Options 2a and 2b drop the primary data collection from homeless service-users and street people, relying instead on information reported by shelter providers through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Comprehensive Homeless Assistance Plan (CHAP) and Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) process.[4] This alternative represents a serious data loss--there would be no information on school attendance or barriers that could be generalized to the national level, and no information about the living arrangements of children who are not with their homeless parents (they might be in either doubled-up or institutional situations). Further, the segment of street homeless would be lost altogether, and the doubled-up segment that would have been captured in non-shelter service locations is also lost. In addition, accuracy would suffer. Calculating accuracy for these designs would be difficult. One would need to know the proportion and types of shelters that do not report and therefore are not included

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4The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 requires states and 220 metropolitan cities and urban counties seeking homeless funding to file a CHAP before receiving HUD funding for homeless projects. The National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 folded the CHAP and its justification of and planning for homeless services into the CHAS, which looks at homelessness and its remedies in the broader context of increasing the availability of affordable housing. The first CHAS is due in October 1991, and must be filed by states and over 800 metropolitan cities and urban counties.

in the CHAP/CHAS; the method of reporting (single night, average single night, occupancy, capacity, etc.) for each shelter; and the probable proportion of the population that do not use shelters before one could begin to judge the accuracy of their estimates. We can be sure, however, that any estimate based on these alternative designs will be less accurate than an estimate based on the primary data collection specified by Options 1a and 1b.

Other significant problems in developing an estimate of homeless children and youth may result from relying on data from HUD's CHAP/CHAS submissions. HUD did not specify data standards for the CHAPs and it found significant variation in the quantity and quality of homeless data in the CHAPs submitted by states and 220 local governments. For the 1991 CHAS submission by states and over 800 cities and urban counties, due in October 1991, a jurisdiction need only complete the elements relating to size and characteristics of the homeless population to the extent that it has existing reliable data meeting HUD standards. If the jurisdiction lacks such data, it may not report any estimate of population size and characteristics. HUD allows jurisdictions to use 1990 Census data, information drawn from administrative record keeping, and data from enumerations, and statistically reliable samples in completing the homeless elements of the CHAS.

To compensate in part for the loss of school attendance and living arrangement information, Options 2a and 2b incorporate a small study--not nationally representative--of homeless family heads and single women in shelters in 6-8 cities. Interviews would be conducted with 40 household heads in family shelters per city (240-320 interviews) and with 40 homeless women in singles shelters per city, of whom 50-60 percent may be expected to have separated from one or more children due to their own homelessness (240-320 interviews yielding 120-192 interviews

containing information about respondents' children). In the absence of a stand-alone national study, this interview component of Options 2a and 2b will be necessary if the Department of Education wants to learn about school attendance and living arrangements, as required by Congress.

The Low-Budget Low-Information Option

Option 3 in Exhibit 3 is the barest-bones design, involving no original data collection of any type. It also provides the least information, and misses the street homeless, homeless who use some services but not shelters, and any information on the doubled-up population except by inference from already available data.

COST ESTIMATES FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND SOME YOUTH

Exhibit 4 gives cost estimates for many study components and options. Westat, Inc., a national survey and research firm, was asked to estimate the costs of data collection for the stand-alone study for three design options: to gain national estimates; to gain national estimates plus estimates for the 30 largest municipalities; and to gain national estimates plus estimates for the 20 largest states. Design specifications were developed by the Census Bureau, and are reproduced in the Appendix, along with Westat's assumptions about the study that help to determine their cost estimates. The designs Westat was asked to price were service-user-only designs; the "service-user-plus-street" cost estimates in Exhibit 4 were created by adding 20 percent to the service-user only costs. The cost estimates for "national plus all states" was created by multiplying the "national plus 20 states" estimate by 3 (with 50 states, one might multiply by 2.5, but smaller

Exhibit 4

Cost of Instrument Development, Data Collection and Analysis for Alternative Research Designs to Gather Information on Homeless Children and some Homeless Youth

	Service-users only	Service-users and "street"
Stand-alone Study, Data Collection		
National	$1.28 million	$1.56 million
National + 30 largest cities	1.91	2.28
National + 20 largest states	3.23	3.88
National + all states	9.69	11.63
National, all states and 30 largest cities	10.29	12.35
Add-ons to Ongoing National Study		
American Housing Survey	$50,000-100,000	
Survey of Income and Program Participation	$25,000-50,000	
Current Population Survey	$150,000-300,000	
Instrument Development		
Stand-alone study	$80,000-90,000	
Add-on questions	$30,000-35,000	
Data Collection, Local Conditions	$50,000-60,000	
Analysis and Reports		
Stand-alone study[1]	$250,000-300,000	
Add-on[2]	$70,000-90,000	
Alternatives to Stand-alone Study		
Analysis of CHAP/CHAS reports, including telephone verification	$50,000-75,000	
Projections from existing national survey data[2]	$70,000-90,000	
Interviews with sheltered families[3]	$200,000-300,000	

1. Including reports to all federal agencies contributing funding to the study.
2. One consolidated report.
3. Includes instrument development, developing sampling frame and obtaining access, conducting 400-500 interviews, analysis and report.

states are more expensive if one wants the same precision of estimate, hence multiplying by 3). The cost estimates for all states and the 30 largest cities was created by adding $600,000 (the difference between "national-plus-30-largest-cities" and "national") to $9.69 million.

We asked Westat for cost estimates without a "street" component because all reports suggest that very few homeless families with children are literally "on the street." If the goal of the study is to find homeless children, the effort and cost involved to include a street component in a study is probably not worth the payoff. However, if this study of homeless children is merged with a larger study of homelessness, the street component would probably be part of the package. A best guess about the added cost of a street component is an additional 20 percent of the estimated cost.

Cost estimates for the add-ons to existing national surveys were obtained from relevant Census Bureau personnel. These are very rough costs, and would vary greatly depending on the number of questions to be asked, and the level of analysis the Census Bureau would be asked to do. The cost estimates in Exhibit 4 are based on the assumption of 6-8 questions, virtually no Census Bureau analysis beyond frequency counts, and the responses to the 6-8 questions added to the public use tape for the study involved. Analysis of these data have been priced separately, and the cost shown in Exhibit 4.

The remaining cost estimates in Exhibit 4 were developed by the Urban Institute, using Urban Institute costs and knowledge of the staff and other resources necessary to complete basic research tasks. Instrument development work includes work on the final study design, designing and composing the interview questions and format, pretesting the interview instrument, redesigning it where necessary, getting OMB clearance (including the OMB clearance package), and allowing for an advisory committee.

Data collection on local conditions would include collecting, for each location where homeless interviews occurred, information on local housing conditions, local labor market conditions, local benefits policy, and local demographic characteristics. Data on local school attendance would also be collected, so that the information from interviews about the school attendance behavior of homeless children and youth can be placed in the appropriate context of local children's behavior. In addition, local school officials would be asked for their best estimates of the numbers of school-age homeless children in their jurisdiction, and for their perceptions of barriers to school attendance. The schools' understanding of these issues could then be compared with the results from interviews with homeless parents and youth, to identify differences.

Analysis and report preparation includes cleaning and consolidating the data files, simple frequency counts and other basic analysis, more complex analyses to meet the needs of relevant federal agencies, and writing reports.

The information in Exhibit 4 does not give a simple total cost for any of the study design options presented in Exhibit 3. Therefore Exhibit 5 selects the appropriate components for several options, and displays these components and their cost. The total estimated cost for Option 1a is $2.06 to 2.44 million. The total estimated cost for Option 1b is only slightly less, at $2.01 to 2.10 million. These are the only options that would produce consistent and reliable national estimates of homeless children and youth, along with information about their living arrangements, school attendance, and educational service needs. Option 2b is considerably less expensive, at $320,000 to $465,000, but would produce much less useful data. The full cost of Option 3 is not shown in

Exhibit 5

Summary of Costs: Alternative Designs

Option 1a: Primary data collection with service-using and street homeless, plus add-on to national on-going survey for doubled-up

Stand-alone Study	
Design, instrument development, OMB	$80,000 - 90,000
Data collection for national estimates	1.56 million
Data collection, local conditions	$50,000 - 60,000
Analysis and reports	$250,000 - 300,000
	$1.94 - 2.01 million
Add-on to Ongoing Survey	
Design, instrument development, OMB	$30,000 - 35,000
Data collection	
American Housing Survey	$50,000 - 100,000
Survey of Income and Program Participation	$25,000 - 50,000
Current Population Survey	$150,000 - 300,000
Analysis and reports	$70,000 - 90,000
	$125,000 - 425,000
OPTION 1A, TOTAL	**$2.06 - 2.44 million**

Option 1b: Primary data collection with service-using and street homeless, analysis of national survey data, without add-on questions, for doubled-up

Stand-alone study (same as Option 1a)	$1.94 - 2.01 million
Projections from existing national survey data	$70,000 - 90,000
	$2.01 - 2.10 million

Option 2b: Analysis of CHAP/CHAS reports, projections from national survey data, interviews with sheltered families.

Analysis of CHAP/CHAS reports, including telephone verification	$50,000 - 75,000
Projections from existing national survey data	$70,000 - 90,000
Interviews with sheltered families	$200,000 - 300,000
	$320,000 - 465,000

Exhibit 5, but can be easily calculated by omitting the cost of interviews with sheltered families. The result is an estimated cost of $120,000 to $165,000.

SPECIAL STUDY TO ENUMERATE HOMELESS STREET YOUTH

The experience of many researchers conducting field studies of homelessness strongly suggests that homeless street youth are not likely to be captured in the commonly used approaches to counting and interviewing the homeless that work with adults. Some of the difficulties and differences in finding and enumerating youths include:

- Youths frequent different parts of town than adult homeless;
- Youths often avoid service facilities, or use different services if they use any at all;
- Youths avoid interviewers or other adults, because they know that adults may report them to child protection or juvenile authorities;
- Youths often travel in groups, which are difficult for adults to approach and speak with unless they are known to someone in the group.

Because of these difficulties and differences, trying to count and interview street youth in the framework of the same study that counts and interviews adult homeless is not likely to work very well. Far too many youth would be missed, or else far too high a proportion of the study's resources would be diverted to assuring a reasonable count of homeless youth. Therefore we have approached developing a design to count homeless street youth as a separate study, and have also priced the effort separately.

Research Triangle Institute (RTI), a national survey and research firm with the most recent and relevant experience in studies with street youth, was asked to develop design specifications to gain national estimates of the size of the homeless street youth population; to gain national estimates plus estimates for the 20 largest states and 30 largest municipalities; and to gain national estimates plus estimates for all 50 states. Their specifications are given in the Appendix.

Based on their experience with past studies of street youth and one study currently in the field, RTI developed a design approach that involves extensive interviewer presence at street locations where they are likely to encounter homeless youth. Every youth who appears to be the right age would be approached and screened to determine whether they are homeless.

The operational definition of homelessness RTI proposes for street youth is "use of non-conventional housing without proper supervision" for at least one night within the 30 days before the interview. Note that this operational definition combines aspects of both runaway and homeless definitions used by HHS. RTI, and we, believe that for street youth, it is a more appropriate, and certainly more feasible, operational definition than the HHS ones.[5] The overall RTI design will capture the largest possible number of youth with their screener definition, and then include questions on the interview to allow researchers to partition the population into segments of interest (e.g., the "weekend" homeless; the push-outs or throwaways; the short-term

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5The problems with the HHS distinctions between runaway and homeless youth were already discussed in an earlier section. They can be illustrated with an example. A recent television special on street youth highlighted the street career of one youth, Ian. Ian had absented himself from his parents' home for about 75-80 percent of the time between his 12th and 17th years. While gone, he lived on the streets, hustling to get money, living in a variety of temporary arrangements with other youth in his street "family." By HHS definitions, Ian is a runaway; he has a home, parents who are willing to have him back, and he is absent from that home without their permission. But from the point of view of Ian's life for most of those six years, he was effectively homeless. The RTI definition would include someone in Ian's situation as "homeless," and gather data through interview questions to describe the situation precisely.

and long-term). This design will thus provide the maximum amount of information for policy purposes.

The design calls for conducting full interviews with every youth who meets the operational definition of homelessness within the past 30 days. More immediate homelessness would be detected through interview questions about homelessness within the past week, and on the night before the interview. RTI estimates are based on the expectation that they will have to screen a very large number of youth to identify and interview those who meet the definition of "homeless." To take seasonal and other variations into account, the data collection in each primary sampling unit would occur over three one-month time periods, one month each during fall, winter and spring.

COST ESTIMATES OF STUDY TO ENUMERATE HOMELESS STREET YOUTH

Exhibit 6 gives cost estimates for three alternative designs for a study to estimate the number of homeless street youth. RTI was also asked to estimate the costs of data collection for the street youth study for their three design options: to gain national estimates; to gain national estimates plus estimates for the 20 largest states and 30 largest municipalities; and to gain national estimates plus estimates for all 50 states. As with the stand-alone study of homeless children with their families, the cost estimates increase as the design options include more jurisdictions (states or cities) for which the precision of the estimate must reach the criterion of a 10 percent coefficient of variation.

The remaining cost estimates in Exhibit 6 are the same as those in Exhibit 4, and were developed by the Urban Institute, using Urban Institute costs and knowledge of the staff and other

Exhibit 6

Homeless Street Youth--
Cost of Instrument Development, Data Collection and Analysis
for Alternative Research Designs

Data Collection Strategy	
Stand-alone Study	
National	$ 2.66 million
National + 20 largest states and 30 largest cities	$ 7.24 million
National + all states	$10.84 million
Instrument Development	$80,000-90,000
Analysis and Reports	$250,000-300,000
Alternatives to Stand-alone Study	
none	

resources necessary to complete basic research tasks. Instrument development work includes work on the final study design, designing and composing the interview questions and format, pretesting the interview instrument, redesigning it where necessary, getting OMB clearance (including the OMB clearance package), and allowing for an advisory committee. Analysis and report preparation includes cleaning and consolidating the data files, simple frequency counts and other basic analysis, more complex analyses to meet the needs of relevant federal agencies, and writing reports.

GETTING TO ANNUAL ESTIMATES FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND SOME YOUTH

We have not proposed any data collection method to get annual unduplicated estimates. The key difficulty in developing accurate annual counts is duplication--counting each homeless person only once, despite the fact that the person uses several services over a period of time and may stay in several different street or other sleeping locations. It is extremely time-consuming to get accurate counts, unduplicated both within and between agencies, of homeless people who use services. Only a few jurisdictions in the country have the data systems to do this, and all use centralized computer resources with terminals in the service delivery agencies. No jurisdiction has a method to obtain unduplicated annual counts of those homeless who do not use services, whether they are "street" homeless or doubled-up. Nor is any jurisdiction, or any special study, likely to implement such a method; the expenditure required, in both staff time and money, would be too great.

Therefore, we propose to rely on projections from accurate point-in-time estimates to obtain annual estimates, based on:

a. Data collected from interviews with homeless respondents;

b. Data from 4 or more systems in the country that can produce both point-in-time and accurate unduplicated-across-and-within-agency annual counts--

- o Franklin County/Columbus, Ohio;
- o Fairfax County, Virginia;
- o Massachusetts;
- o Omaha, Nebraska;
- o Louisville, Kentucky.

Crude Method for Producing an Estimate of the Number Homeless During One Year, from Interview Data

The simplest approach to developing an estimate of annual prevalence uses data on length of homelessness collected in point-in-time studies such as the one we propose in Options 1a or 1b. It rests on the assumption that people enter homelessness at a steady rate, so if one can determine the number of people who became newly homeless during a given period of time--say the past month--one can treat this as something that happens every month, and multiply. To make this estimate, one would:

1. Take an estimate of the number of people homeless at a given point in time;

2. Extract from this estimate the number of people who have been homeless for one month or less (that is, they entered homelessness during the past month);

3. Multiply by 11 (to get the number of people who become homeless during each remaining month of the year); and

4. Add these projections of the numbers expected to enter homelessness during the next 11 months to the estimate of those homeless during month 1.

The assumption underlying this procedure is that each person only becomes homeless once during the year--a dubious assumption given recent research evidence of frequent movement in and out of homelessness.

Data from the Urban Institute's 1987 national study of urban homeless service users can be used to illustrate how this approach works.[6] Among homeless households with children in this study, 10.6 percent had been homeless for less than one month. Multiplying this number by 11 and adding it to the total point estimate for homeless families indicated that for every family that was homeless at the time of the survey, an additional 1.16 families experienced homelessness during a year's time. That is, the point-in-time estimate was slightly less than half the annual estimate, or 1 to 2.16.

However, the very long homeless spells of New York City's homeless families, and the high proportion of all homeless families that they represented, distorts this picture somewhat. The point-in-time to annual ratio for New York City's homeless families was 1 to 1.38; the parallel ratio for all cities excluding New York was 1 to 2.57.

Crude Method for Obtaining a Likely Range for the Ratio of Average Single-Night Homelessness to Annual Prevalence, for Families

Several jurisdictions around the country have developed very sophisticated systems that cover all or almost all of the shelters (and sometimes other services) in their community, assign

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6 Burt, Martha R. and Cohen, Barbara E. Feeding the Homeless: Does the Prepared Meals Provision Work? (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 1988).

unique identifiers to service users, and can produce unduplicated annual counts as well as average nightly counts. Some jurisdictions can do this for all of their homeless, others only for families, but families is all we need for the purpose of this work.

Data from two of these systems, the State of Massachusetts and Franklin County (Columbus) Ohio, give an idea of the type of data available from these systems, and how one would apply it.

Massachusetts. In FY90, Massachusetts sheltered an average of 781 families nightly. The average sheltered family had one mother and two children, or, on average, 781 parents and 1562 children per night. Over the entire 1990 fiscal year, the state sheltered 4700 families (4700 adults and 9400 children). The ratio of one-night count to annual prevalence in FY90 was thus 1 to 6.

In FY91, Massachusetts sheltered an average of 584 families nightly. The average sheltered family had one mother and two children, or, on average, 584 parents and 1168 children per night. Over the entire 1991 fiscal year, the state sheltered 3000 families (3000 adults and 6000 children). The ratio of one-night count to annual prevalence in FY91 was thus 1 to 5.[7]

Franklin County (Columbus) Ohio. In FY91 (July 1990 through June 1991), Franklin County is projecting they will have served 684 different families, or about 1700 family members. Their average nightly number of families during the same year was 80, including 200 children, for a ratio of one-night count to annual prevalence in FY91 of 1 to 8.5.

7The drop in families sheltered between 1990 and 1991 does not necessarily imply that fewer families became homeless in 1990 than in 1991. Various factors could be at work, including longer shelter stays, or the reluctance of homeless families to report to the welfare offices through which Massachusetts processes all applications for shelter from homeless families.

Suppose that we learned, through the survey proposed as Option 1a, that there were 80,000 homeless children in shelters on any average night. We might then take the Massachusetts data and deduce that between 400,000 and 480,000 children had been homeless at some time during the year in which the survey was done. If we used the Franklin County ratio, we would conclude that about 680,000 children had been homeless at some time during the survey year. Taking the average nightly and annual prevalence data from several jurisdictions will produce a reasonable range for the ratio of average nightly homelessness to annual prevalence. This range can be applied to any national data we obtain, to produce a reasonable guess as to the likely annual prevalence of children's homelessness.

THE TIMING OF A NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION EFFORT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Congress has required the Department of Education to report, by December 1992, on the results of any study it undertakes to obtain national counts and other information about homeless children and youth. Realistically, this deadline cannot be met. The following is a realistic schedule for obtaining the required data, if performed entirely by the Department of Education, suggesting that Congress could expect a preliminary report from a stand-alone Department of Education study by winter 1994 at the earliest:

- o 12-1-91 Legislation passes authorizing study and appropriating funds
- o 7-1-92 Department of Education issues Request for Proposals to conduct study (7 months)
- o 11-1-92 Department of Education awards contract; work begins (4 months)
- o 4-30-93 Design, instrument development and OMB clearance completed (6 months)

- o 7-31-93 Sampling, interviewer recruitment and training completed (6 months, overlapping with design and instrument development)
- o 11-30-93 Field work (data collection) completed (4 months)
- o 12-31-93 Clean data tape delivered (1 month)
- o 2-28-94 Data editing, cleaning, consolidation, preparation completed (2 months)
- o 4-30-94 Simple frequencies and cross-tabulations available (2 months)
- o 8-31-94 More complex analyses and final report available (4 months)

APPENDIX

Specifications for Three National Designs for Primary Data Collection with Homeless Service Users

1. Data to provide national estimates of numbers of homeless children, with C.V. of 10%.

First Stage:	30 largest municipalities 35 municipalities or counties with populations of 100,000 or more (including balance of counties once you take out the municipalities over 100,000) 8 areas outside of MSAs.
Second Stage:	500 shelters, soup kitchens, etc. distributed over the 65 MSA sampling units as appropriate in rural areas--probably, every service one can find.
Third Stage:	Interviews with 3000 people found at sampled sites in MSA sampling units, and 250 from the 8 non-MSA areas. The 3000 will include some people who are not literally homeless, since we want to interview a sample of everyone who uses soup kitchens, food pantries, etc.

2. Data to provide national estimates plus estimates for the 30 largest municipalities, of numbers of homeless children, with C.V. of 10%.

First Stage:	30 largest municipalities 20 municipalities or counties with populations of 100,000 or more (including balance of counties once you take out the municipalities over 100,000) 6 areas outside of MSAs.
Second Stage:	850 shelters, soup kitchens, etc. in the 30 largest 100 shelters, etc. in other MSA sampling units as appropriate in rural areas--probably, every service one can find.
Third Stage:	9400 interviews in 30 largest 600 interviews in other MSA sampling units 150 interviews in non-MSA areas

3. Data to provide national estimates plus estimates for the 20 largest states, of numbers of homeless children, with C.V. of 10%.

First Stage:	32 largest municipalities 90 municipalities or counties with populations of 100,000 or more (including balance of counties once you take out the municipalities over 100,000) 226 smaller non-rural municipalities or counties 84 areas outside of MSAs.
Second Stage:	Total of approximately 1500 shelters, etc. in non-rural areas depending on how the sample is allocated within smaller non-rural areas (i.e., depending on what you find where) as appropriate in rural areas--probably, every service one can find.
Third Stage:	20,400 interviews in 20 largest states approximately 500 interviews in other states

Bid Specifications Submitted by Westat for the Field Work Related to the Three Designs

Option 1: $ 1,276,786
Option 2: $ 1,918,350
Option 3: $ 3,231,972

The enclosed budget gives detailed breakdowns of labor hours and other direct costs. The percentage breakdowns of the major cost components are given below.

Cost Component	Option-1	Option-2	Option-3
Sampling and listing	25%	17%	17%
Interviewer hiring, training; Pretest	25%	14%	11%
Data Collection	35%	54%	58%
Data Preparation	16%	16%	14%

In order to prepare these estimates, it was necessary to make a number of assumptions. Certain assumptions, such as the length of the interview, the number of PSU's, sites, and interviews, are contained in your letter of May 29. Some additional assumptions are as follows:

Schedule

- The start date will be in June, 1992;
- The field period will begin 6/6/9 months later (Options 1/2/3);
- The project will last a total of 12/14/18 months (Options 1/2/3);
- Most of the Telephone Research Center staff hours will be incurred in 1992;
- Most of the Field staff hours will be incurred in 1993;

Questionnaire Design and Printing

- Westat will not have primary responsibility for the design and revision of the survey questionnaire for the field interviews;
- Westat will not be involved in the preparation of the OMB package;
- Westat will print the questionnaire for the field interviews;

Frames Development

- Westat will develop the sample frame for each sampled PSU;
- Listing will require 40 hours per PSU;

Interviewer Recruiting and Training; Pretest

- Westat will recruit all interviewers;
- Westat will train all interviewers;
- Training will take place at a Westat facility in Rockville, MD, and will last three days;
- There will be an average of two interviewers per PSU;
- Westat will conduct a pretest of up to three sites in the Washington Metropolitan area;

Data Collection

- Interviewers will work in pairs;
- The pair of interviewers will spend one half day to visit each site and prepare for data collection;
- The pair of interviewers will spend one half day on each subsequent data collection visit;
- An average of four interviews will be completed during each visit by the pair of interviewers;
- There will be six regional field supervisors;

Data Processing -- Westat will...

- key enter and clean the data;
- compute the sample weights;
- prepare a clean data tape;
- run initial descriptive statistics, but not perform additional statistical analyses;
- develop the sample weights and include them on the data tape; and
- deliver a brief report that describes the methodology.

PARAMETERS THAT DRIVE COSTS	OPT-1	OPT-2	OPT-3
Number of PSU's	73	56	84
Number of Sites	532	974	1,836
Number of Interviews	3,250	10,150	20,900
Number of Sites/PSU	7	17	22
Number of Interviews/Site	6	10	11
Number of Interviews/PSU	45	181	249
Length of Interview (minutes)	30	30	30
Time to Key Enter (minutes)	6	6	6
Time to Code (minutes)	40	40	40
Number of Interviewer Hours/Complete (excludes setup)	3	3	3
Number of Interviewer Hours/Site Setup	8	8	8
Number of Interviewer Hours/PSU	191	679	923
Number of Interviewer Hours Total	13,943	38,024	77,532
Number of Interviews/Day/Interviewer Pair	4	4	4
Number Days/Site (includes 1 day for setup)	3	4	4
Number of Days/PSU	21	68	88
Field Duration (months)	2	4	5
Number of Interviewers/PSU	2	2	2
Number of Interviewers Total	146	112	168
Number of Field Supervisors Total	6	6	6
TRC hours/PSU - list and screen	40	40	40
TRC hours/site - gain entry to sampled sites	2	2	2
TRC hours/PSU - total	54	74	84

Bid Specifications Submitted by Research Triangle Institute for the Field Work Related to the Street Youth Designs

Estimates of Sampling and Data Collection Work for Three Designs to Count Homeless Children

	Options		
	1	2	3
Sampling Assumptions			
PSUs	75	190	300
Blocks	9,000	25,000	36,000
Screen	60,000	168,000	240,000
Interview	1,500	4,200	6,000
Interview hours	85,000	232,000	330,000
Costs by Task			
Study Orientation	24,000	58,000	78,000
Sampling	111,000	187,000	270,000
Data Collection	2,460,000	6,840,000	10,255,000
Data Processing	69,000	158,000	234,000
Total	2,664,000	7,243,000	10,837,000

Options:

1. Data to provide national estimates of numbers of homeless street youth, with C.V. of 10%.

2. Data to provide national estimates plus estimates for the 20 largest states and 30 largest municipalities, of numbers of homeless street youth, with C.V. of 10%.

3. Data to provide national estimates plus estimates for each of the 50 states, of numbers of homeless street youth, with C.V. of 10%.

ASSUMPTIONS FOR ESTIMATES

Schedule

- The start date will be September, 1992;
- The field period for all options will be January-April, 1993
- The project will last a total of 12 months
- Most of the field staff hours will be incurred in 1993;

Questionnaire Design and Printing

- RTI will not have primary responsibility for the design and revision of the survey questionnaire for field interviews;
- RTI will not be involved in the preparation of the OMB package;
- RTI will the questionnaire for the field interviews;

Frames Development

- RTI will recruit all interviewers for options 2 and 3 (sufficient interviewers are already available for option 1);
- RTI will train all interviewers;
- Training will last three days. Training for options 1, 2, and 3 will be conducted in 2, 4, and 6 sites, respectively;
- There will be an average of between two and three interviewers per PSU;
- RTI will conduct a pretest in 2 urban and 1 rural area;

Data Collection

- Interviewers will work in teams of 2 or 3;
- Teams will spend 1 hour to visit each site and prepare for data collection;
- Teams will spend four hours on each data collection visit;
- An average of 1 interview will be completed during each visit by the team of interviewers;
- The number of regional field supervisors will be 13, 34, and 53 for options 1, 2, and 3, respectively;

Data Processing - RTI will:

- key, enter, and clean the data;
- compute the sample weights;
- prepare a clean data tape;
- run initial descriptive statistics, but not perform additional statistical analyses;
- develop the sample weights and include them on the data tape; and
- deliver a brief report that describes the methodology.

The data collection period for each block will comprise four hours, of which one will be used in travel and the other three for screening and interviewing eligible youth. For reasons of precision in calculating estimations, the data collection period should remain constant across sites (and not abbreviated at any given site if a block were initially to appear devoid of potentially eligible youth). Since homeless youth tend to be mobile, a consistently shorter period might well yield an underestimation of this population.

We anticipate an average of 40 screenings over a three hour period, which will take place in daylight or early evening hours. Of these 40 youths screened, we anticipate that only one (or 2.5%) will meet the twin eligibility requirements of age and homeless experiences, and that even a highly experienced interviewer could reduce this ratio by visually discriminating with certainty between eligible and ineligible youth. Even comparatively well-dressed and well-groomed youth may have a homeless experience within the one-month referent period considered appropriate for the Department of Education.

We are aware that the ratio of screened to eligible youth would probably be decreased by conducting screenings during early morning hours. However, interviewer safety may well be compromised as a result, and the number of potentially eligible youth found sleeping (and thus unavailable for a screening) would greatly increase. Further, while the ratio of screenings to interviews would decrease, the number of completed interviews would probably remain static; interviewers would simply spend more of their time idle.

Still another means of increasing the "hit" rate - that is, the number of completed interviews per block period - would entail limiting sampled blocks to those identified by local experts as likely to have a high density of eligible youth. However, insofar as this approach would tend to leave out or severely under-represent low- and moderate-density sites, it would not generate valid estimates. Such an approach also introduces sampling weights that are very unequal, and thus decreases the precision of estimations. Further difficulties with this approach include an undue reliance on the judgment of local experts, whose knowledge of a given local area may be incomplete.

Essential Interview Topics
for Stand-Alone Study and Add-ons

1. How long has it been since you had a home or a permanent place to stay?

2. What type of place was that?
   - Who else lived there?
   - Why did you leave?
   - How long had you lived there?
   - Who paid?

3. Where have you stayed since that time?

4. Did you stay with family or friends for any of it?

   Please describe:

   - How long?
   - Contribute to rent?
   - Host's economic circumstances
   - Problems in that situation for you?

   How many different places? How long each?

5. Where were you staying immediately before you came to this shelter?

   Please describe: same as for q.4

6. Where have you slept for the past 30 days:

   - Shelter
   - Home of family/friends
   - Vehicle
   - Street/public place
   - Abandoned building
   - Institution
   - etc.

7. Is this your first time homeless?

8. If not, how many times before?

9. How old were you when you first became homeless?

10. Since that first time when you became homeless, how much of the time have you been without a home or permanent place to stay?

11. Were you in an institution (MH, drug treatment, detox, jail, group home, etc.) for any part of that time? What type of institution? How long? What proportion?

12. This time, how long have you been sleeping on the streets or in shelters?

Suggested Topics Pertaining to Respondent's Children

13. Do you have children (make sure to ask this question of women in singles shelters)?

14. How many children do you have?

    Make column for each child--at top of column goes age and gender, then checklist for other q's

15. Were all of your children living with you right before you became homeless (this time)? Check yes, or if no, where were the kids? Why not with you?

16. Where are these children now? With R, with other parent, with other relative, with friends, in foster care, in institution, other, don't know.

17. Are your children attending school now? Which children? How regularly? What kinds of things keep them from attending school?

    Before you became homeless, were your children attending school? Which children? How regularly? What kinds of things kept them from attending school?

18. What would help you stay in school (if currently attending)?

19. What would help you attend school regularly/go back to school (if not attending regularly, or not enrolled)?

National Study to Identify, Locate, and Count Homeless Children and Youth

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